National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences

Implications of climate change (global warming) for the healthcare system

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Abstract:

WHAT IS KNOWN and OBJECTIVE: Temperature-sensitive pathogenic species and their vectors and hosts are emerging in previously colder regions as a consequence of several factors, including global warming. As a result, an increasing number of people will be exposed to pathogens against which they have not previously needed defences. We illustrate this with a specific example of recent emergence of Cryptococcus gattii infections in more temperate climates. COMMENT: The outbreaks in more temperate climates of the highly virulent--but usually tropically restricted--C. gattii is illustrative of an anticipated growing challenge for the healthcare system. There is a need for preparedness by healthcare professionals in anticipation and for management of such outbreaks, including other infections whose recent increased prevalence in temperate climates can be at least partly associated with global warming. WHAT IS NEW and CONCLUSION: (Re)emergence of temperature-sensitive pathogenic species in more temperate climates will present new challenges for healthcare systems. Preparation for outbreaks should precede their occurrence.

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Resource Description

Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Temperature

Temperature: Fluctuations

Geographic Feature:

resource focuses on specific type of geography

Tropical

Geographic Location:

resource focuses on specific location

Global or Unspecified

Health Impact:

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Infectious Disease

Infectious Disease: Airborne Disease

Airborne Disease: Cryptococcosis

Resource Type:

format or standard characteristic of resource

Policy/Opinion

Timescale:

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified